

From the Author to The Rev^d Dr. Franklin.

THE
EXHIBITION:
A
POEM.

[Price Two-Shillings.]

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THE
EXHIBITION
OF
PAINTING:
A
POEM.

ADDRESSED TO THE LADIES.

L O N D O N :

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MDCCCLXXV.



T H E
E X H I B I T I O N,
A
P O E M.

WHEN wintry frosts, and storms give way ;
And gentle, vernal breezes play :
When woods, and plains, and forests wear
The liv'ry of the rip'ning year ;
And Flora's earliest gifts, bespread
With mingled dyes their flow'ry bed :
When the soft tenants of the spray,
With shriller notes salute the day ;
And Nature's universal voice,
Bids in the genial warmth rejoice :

B

From

From the full town in crowds pours out
The giddy, pleasure-ficken'd rout.
Plays, op'ras, concerts, charm no more.
The scene is clos'd — their reign is o'er.

Now drooping beauty hastes to seek
Fresh vermeil for her faded cheek.
She seeks it in the friendly shade,
Where no tumultuous joys invade —
In rural pleasures — soft repose —
In ev'ry cheering breeze that blows.
In rambles o'er the hill — the lawn —
At closing eve, and early dawn:
Thence, crown'd by smiling health, to bear
A bloom no Warren can prepare.

Then quit those dang'rous scenes, ye fair!
If health, if beauty claim your care!



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3

O haste ! and if the smiling plain,
 With pleasures pure, an endless train,
 Should fail your ev'ry sense to charm,
 And your deluded fancies warm ;
 By slow degrees, detach your mind
 From ev'ry folly left behind.
 Choose, to beguile the tedious hours
 Midst shady walks, and op'ning flow'rs,
 Some of the idly busy race
 Whose footsteps wear each publick place ;
 Or snatch from ruin, and despair,
 The duped, infatuated heir,
 Ere his tall woods, and ancient hall,
 A prey to sharpening miscreants fall.

Draw from the town its worst annoys,
 Those plotting knaves, and brawling boys,
 Those courtly sycophants and tools —
 Those noisy patriots, and their fools,

Who, link'd in factious bands, have long
Compos'd a restless clam'rous throng.
Give but the word, they'll break the chain,
With you to range the peaceful plain.

If Patriot Zeal their warmth create
To plan new laws, and mend the state,
Reason's still voice, in solitude,
In Party's spite, will still intrude ;
And, if it's dictates they obey,
They'll learn that clamour's not the way.

Is Loyalty their boast ? their aim
To raise their Sovereign's honour'd name ?
Let them a Virtuous Prince obey ;
And, (as they ought) due reverence pay
To sacred order, and its laws ;
But if they'd well support his cause,

Reflection

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5

Reflection sage will make them feel,
That neither King's, nor People's weal
Can be secur'd by venal arts ;
But call for honest, upright hearts.

Let none their jarring humours bring
In thy blest walks, O! gentle Spring!
Let not destructive Party, wear
It's low'ring front, to blast the year!

And yet 'twere pity now to fly
The town, while for the curious eye
Remains one pleasure yet in store :
Perhaps, worth all you've seen before :
For now (to crown your annual cheer,
And close th' amusements of the year)
The Arts superbly raise the head ;
And op'ning Exhibitions, spread

Their best productions fair to fight,
T' arrest your eye, and check your flight.
For not in vain does Royal pow'r,
With tend'rest culture nurse the flow'r,
The bud of genius—or protect
It's op'ning beauties from neglect.
Collected in bright order—here
The bud—the flow'r—the fruits appear.

The skillful artist's labours view,
In some rich scene.—How nobly true
His faithful pencil has design'd
Th' ideas of a well-fraught mind!
Does warlike acts his mind inspire?
His genius glows with martial fire.
If, in the dreadful front of war,
His hero mounts the conqu'ror's car;
Or deck'd with more resplendent grace,
The milder virtues, o'er his face

Beaming

Beaming sweet Mercy's melting charms,
Amid the horrid glare of arms :
His pencil, to his judgment true,
Marks the great minute, when to view
His fav'rite rifles, doubly great ;
And moves in more than conq'ror's state.

Would he a scene pathetic show,
And paint, in all the pomp of woe,
Some fair distress'd — some vanquish'd chief —
Or Monarch in majestic grief ?
We feel the deep, soul-moving art,
Thro' ev'ry labyrinth of the heart ;
Waken each tender feeling there —
Call forth the sympathetic tear —
Pity, with admiration join'd,
Fast stealing o'er the soft'ned mind,
On which the well-wrought scenes impress
A virtuous sorrow ! — sweet distress !

Subservient to inventive art,
Imagination plays its part :
It's captivating influence spreads,
And genius thro' wild mazes leads,
To Cytherea's fragrant groves,
'Midst Venus, and the laughing loves ;
Or bids excursive fancy stray,
Where Bacchanals, and Satyrs play ;
Run all the fields of fiction o'er,
Till fable can supply no more ;
Collecting, as it roves along,
Strange tales, that oft', in ancient song,
Adorn'd the Poet's loftiest lays ;
And grace ev'n those of modern days.
These, still the artist's fancy warm,
And on his glowing canvas charm.
At his command, in order, there
Heroes and Demi-Gods appear :

While

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9

While each bright Goddess of the sky,
And earth, and sea-born deity,
Wak'd by his magic touch, arise,
To fascinate our eager eyes;
And half persuade us, as we view,
To think the pleasing fictions true.

If fabled beauties thus supply
Charms to allure th' admiring eye!
Those striking beauties truly caught
From *living* models, richly fraught
With ev'ry charm of shape and face
That might the Cyprian Goddess grace,
May well the artist's genius fire,
And bid the won'dring world admire.

From Demi-Gods, and Heroes too,
Let us a while suspend our view;

C

And

THE EXHIBITION.

And stop to note that fire — that life —
Those ardours, that, with noble strife,
Conspire to form the dauntless mien
That in a British Worthy's seen.
To copy Nature, and to give
Distinguish'd excellence to live,
Thro' long succeeding years; when fame
Can but preserve the honour'd name
From dark oblivion, ere it spread
It's close-drawn curtain round the head —
Be this the artist's praise — to save
Uninjur'd from the insatiate grave,
The well-known face, and form admir'd,
With native, living grace inspir'd.

If studying Nature's noblest forms,
Thus, imitative genius warms;
Beauties inanimate, demand
The touches of a skilful hand,

To

To mark the wild romantic spot —
The Precipice — the gloomy grott —
The tow'ring rock, whose summit bears
Unmov'd, amidst the wreck of years,
Some venerable pile — the ground
With awful ruins scatter'd round.
Or to design with graceful care
The well-spread lawn — the mansion fair,
Shelter'd by woods — by streams supplied —
The gardens rich in summer pride —
Each, jointly striking on the sight,
Shew the possessor can unite
Taste with magnificence; nor love
To torture Nature, but improve.

Or let the pencil bring to view
A scene all striking, bold, and new,
Midst warring elements, whose strife
Each moment threatens precarious life.

How, dreadful, o'er the vast profound,
BRITANNIA darts her thunders round:
Or let us, in victorious pride,
See her triumphant Navy ride.

The task were endless, bold, and vain,
To note each subject, and explain
The various funds, whence genius draws
It's boundless stores. — By no fixt laws
It acts; but soaring high,
And far — and wide — a rich supply
Great Nature yields; nor copious Art
Denies to furnish out a part.

See Sculpture too, it's pow'rs combine
To bid the yielding marble shine;
And soft'ning into life, unfold
With strong expression, true, as bold

The

THE EXHIBITION.

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The speaking look — the features — air —
Proportion — grace — and character,
So nicely just — so nobly free —
No more a senseless block we see;
But from beneath the artist's hands
With animation warm, it stands;
Seeming to breathe, and speak, and move;
As if it, conscious, fought to prove
The won'drous pow'r of forming art,
To please the eye, and touch the heart.

If Sculpture may such merit claim?
Allow it proper helps to fame!
Let it not rest obscure — unknown —
What is a king without his throne?
Let Architecture form a seat —
A temple — where in concord sweet,
The arts may homage due receive,
While they, alternate take, and give,

From each to other, added grace :

As disposition — order — place —

Uniting, aid their pow'r to please,

With a well-studied graceful ease.

'Tis thus the skillful Architect

Knows how to heighten, and select

Those works of genius that combine

To furnish out his grand design :

Till all arrang'd in order meet,

The finish'd fabrick stands compleat.

To see the day when BRITAIN'S fame

For Arts, as Arms, shall rise the same :

When those deservedly renown'd

For wisdom, and with honours crown'd,

Shall glory, with a gracious smile

T' invite the arts to bless our isle :

Here

Here bid them flourish, fair, and free;
While all their zealous vot'ries see
True merit rising from neglect,
With a Mæcenæ to protect.
This is the wish—th' inspiring ray
Of hope, that cheers the doubtful day,
Till full it breaks upon the sight,
And latent genius starts to light.

Say! shall the Muse (who pines to see
Beneath the smiles of liberty,
Each sister art, with aspect sweet,
Here fixt, as in their native seat)
To the fam'd Great address her pray'r,
Commending to their guardian care
Her long neglected, dear allies,
Beseeching them for full supplies
Of patronage—of grace, and favour,
(On promise fair of good behaviour)

To purchase a large stock of fame,
On which their family and name
To build; and with encreasing merit
A patrimony fair inherit?

The Great, perhaps, may, harsh, refuse
Attention to a begging Muse;
And let her poor petition lie,
With killing, cold contempt, thrown by
Amongst *petitions* without number,
Mere trash esteem'd, and useless lumber,
Faintly receiv'd and bid to wait
A leisure hour, to know her fate.
Say, must she wait to learn her doom,
That leisure hour? — *which ne'er may come* —

A fate like this, the free-born Muse
Abhorrent shuns! — Far happier views

She

She forms; and to the courteous ear
Of beauty turns, disdaining fear.

On you, bright Patronesses all!
On you, ye British Fair, I call!
To you my artless lays address.
From your sweet influence hope success.

'Tis in that seat of sense refin'd,
Th' accomplish'd, well-turn'd female mind,
Whose gen'rous, rich, prolific soil,
Grateful rewards the lab'rer's toil,
That every virtue deep takes root.
There many a fair luxuriant shoot
Of genius yields it's blossoms rare,
And claims the fostering hand of care.
O! let it not uncherish'd die,
While ev'ry needful help is nigh!

D

While

While unrestrain'd fair Science sheds
Her rip'ning beams around your heads ;
Deals out her gifts, with bounteous hand,
At each fair claimant's soft demand !
Improve with industry and skill
Those gifts ! She'll prove more bounteous still ;
And adding daily to your store,
Create a growing wish for more ;
Till with the full profusion crown'd,
Rich fruits of knowledge shall abound,
By judgment fitted to conduce
Either to ornament, or use.

By study train'd — by nature prone
To make each graceful art your own,
Advance, ye Fair, and take the field !
Bid the proud Sons of Science yield
The reins of fashion to your sway ;
And let your footsteps mark their way ;

Then

Then chearful in your train advance:
If thro' the paths of elegance
And taste, they'd wish to turn it's course,
Spite of intruding folly's force;
Shew them how well you know to trace
The way; and lead with steady pace
To where the finer arts, conspire
With noble, emulative fire,
On your approving sight to press.
Seeking a gen'rous patroness,
In ev'ry bright judicious eye;
Hoping th' expected minute nigh,
When, for one great protecting friend,
The rights of genius to defend,
Numbers shall rise at your command,
The champions of it's cause to stand.

But, lest the Muse should seem to court
In terms too grave your kind support;

And, with a dictatorial air,
Give formal lessons to the Fair,
We'll change the scene: and (if you please)
In your own way, with careless ease —
— Gaily treat th' important theme,
Like a pleasing golden dream,
Of pleasures ever blooming — new —
Fit to enchant the muse, and you.
Talk of Parties — crowds of Beaux —
And of glitt'ring, kill-time shows.

She (trust me fair ones) meant no more
By all her hum-drum talk before,
Than just to shew that, Taste, like Fashion,
From you takes birth — becomes a passion,
A leading principle, and active.
With pow'rs resistless, and attractive
It moves. — What force its speed can stay,
When sov'reign Beauty leads the way?

Now

Now feels Pall-Mall a gen'ral bustle,
And coaches — chairs, each other jostle;
Fashion lends wings to expedition;
For now a glorious *Exhibition*
Opens indeed! where not alone,
In lifeless canvas, clay, or stone
Contending beauties seem to vie,
Which first shall catch the gen'ral eye:
But beauty, in attractive motion
Engrosses all that warm devotion,
The Arts, ambitious, hop'd to share.
Eclips'd — not humbled — they shall dare
Still, to the Fair their cause commend,
And in each rival hope a friend.

Well may they hope — (for *entre nous*)
The tell-tale Muse (it's very true,

For falshood she abhors like treason)
Can give a certain, secret reason,
To prove those hopes not vainly founded;
But on good nat'ral causes grounded.
She's too clear-sighted to mistake
The motives of each step you make,
To bring assembled crowds together.
— You'll say, 'tis most inviting weather!
And really t'were absurd to stay
Moping at home the live-long day,
When all the world a gadding go.
Besides, "I doat on paintings so!"

Well, I'll admit that plea, allowing
Something to taste — to custom owing:
But prithee, DELIA, be sincere!
Did STREPHON not attend you there;
Or did he not with rapture fly,
Day, after day, to feast his eye,

And

And honour with his praise, what most
His solid judgment deems the boast,
And glory of the age — would you,
With such delight those pieces view?
Confess! — (nor blush to have it known)
That by his taste you've form'd your own.
If merit, sense, and taste, combin'd,
Adorn, and dignify his mind:
O'er yours, if his sweet converse pour
Some fresh instruction ev'ry hour —
Is it not glorious, to improve,
By lessons from the lips of Love?
A free conclusion, this you'll call.
— 'Tis just tho', Ladies, after all:
For spite of ev'ry art, with man
You act upon an even plan.

If coxcombs all occasions seize,
The triflers of your sex to please:

To Auctions, Warehouses — and places
Where India toys, and foreign laces
Are shewn, incessantly attend,
And praise each bauble they commend?
With you, ye more enlighten'd Fair,
If men of sense delighted share
Those hoards of knowledge they have drain'd
From study, or by travel gain'd?
You, in return, to please them more,
Should still with added treasures store
Your minds — But how? perhaps you'll ask.
Why thus — and 'tis an easy task.

By hours o'er books, delightful spent,
When oft' on great events intent,
Th' expanded mind roams far abroad,
Along that vast capacious road,
By the Historian's faithful pen
Mark'd out. — Not uninstructed, then

Thro'

Thro' backward ages, pleas'd you tread,
Conversing with the mighty dead.

Your closet friends, the Poets too,
So cherish'd by the Arts, and You,
Bring many a tale of tender woe,
Touch'd up, with all the melting flow
Of language, which, without controul,
Rule each emotion of the soul.
These, with historic facts combin'd,
By mem'ry stored — the female mind
Acquires each requisite to frame
A judgment just — And hence to fame
Whoever has, with happiest art,
Studied that copious, noblest part,
Within the pencil's reach, shall rise,
And from the Fair obtain the prize —
The bright reward to genius due :
For, Ladies ! 'tis no more from you

The would-be wit, and critic spark,
Shall, sneering, hear th' absurd remark;
Praises on parts minute, and mean;
Mere accessories in a scene;
While the *great beauties only*, lie
Hid from the injudicious eye.

With conscious skill to judge, in turn
You take the laugh, and learn to spurn
Those vain pretenders, who, of words
Pick'd up by rote, produce their hoards —
Run all the critic's language o'er;
And rich in terms — in judgment poor —
With half-form'd taste, and full-blown pride,
Boldly, on ev'ry thing decide.

At their expence, you'll learn to prize
True taste, and turn approving eyes,

Where

THE EXHIBITION.

27

Where the true Critic — Patron — Friend
Of genius, does with warmth commend.
Join in that praise, which candid flows,
And only trifle with the Beaux.

Now onward to the Strand repair :
See, what new wonders wait you there !
Examine all ; and on the best
Delighted dwell — But by the test
Of Taste improv'd let each be tried ;
Not judg'd with rash, pedantic pride.
Then as your brilliant eyes survey
Of Arts each sep'rate rich display,
Will not surrounding crowds aspire
To taste those beauties you admire ?

So while to fill a vacant hour
(As flies the Bee, from flow'r, to flow'r,

Collecting sweets) you love to 'stray ;
The treasures gather'd in your way,
Temper'd like hers, and wisely stor'd,
Will future rich supplies afford.

'Tis thus, ye Fair, amusement lends
It's aid, to serve the noblest ends ;
And leads you smilingly along
In many a bright successive throng
From scene, to scene, till (objects rare
Your eyes accustom'd to compare,
With skill, and still encreasing pleasure)
Of Judgment — Taste — a growing treasure
You soon possess ; and wide diffuse,
(So prophesies the sanguine Muse)
A gen'ral, active, steady flame,
To light true merit on to fame.
Nay, more ! — It hopes to gain from you
Assistance to deserve it too.

Zeuxis, to form a perfect piece,
From all the fairest Dames of Greece,
Each sep'rate grace, and beauty, drew.
Our modern artists seek from you
Models from which to sketch a grace :
A Venus, or Minerva's face :
A Juno's grand majestic mien ;
Or Egypt's fair, unhappy queen,
Whose fascinating charms enslav'd
The conq'rors of the world, and brav'd
The Roman pow'rs. — A thousand more
Great female names remain in store,
Fit subjects for the pencil too,
Whose lovely forms they trace from you.

Lov'd — courted — honour'd — and admir'd
For merit, native, and acquir'd ;

Fashion's

Fashion's supreme, and sole directors —
Of Arts, the friends, and firm protectors —
Say, can your gentle hearts refuse
Protection to a timid Muse?
Till now, who fearless tun'd the lay,
To while the careless hours away,
Unheard — unseen by ev'ry eye,
As shrubs in deserts bloom, and die.
Too proud in humble guise to dress,
And, on the awful Publick, press
A moving speech for grace — to you,
Ladies, she's not ashamed to sue;
Conscious that on a begging plan
To you her first address began.
Disinterested — free, she pleaded
The cause in hand — how well succeeded,
Time must unfold. — Herself, mean while,
If flatter'd by a gracious smile,

Her little labours to o'er pay,
With strains improv'd, another day,
Perhaps, may learn to please you better;
When fears, and doubts, no longer fetter
Her feeble pow'rs. — And now, with you,
(Bidding the noisy town adieu)
To rural scenes, where Zephyr flings
Reviving odours from his wings,
She means to fly, and pleas'd, inhale
The sweets of ev'ry passing gale.
Thence, on her strengthen'd pinions, bear
(Ere the mild Seasons cease to cheer)
Fresh-gather'd spoils, the woods among;
Materials for some future song.

THE END.



